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I traveled with Pat and Paul Krause and others to the Behrhorst Clinic in the summer of 1971. I remember arriving in Chimaltenango in the evening. It was dark, and there was a ferris wheel on the plaza in front of the cathedral. We walked into the Clinic and Dr. Behrhorst had a medical student from the states working with him.

I remember a little boy named Jose. He and his sister had measles and they both survived. I remembered what it was like when I had measles 11 years earlier. Jose was the sweetest, brightest child and loved to be with us.

The five women in our group stayed in a house probably about a mile or so from the clinic. We had a cistern that collected rainwater and this provided water for our flush toilet and showers. The shower was a pipe - no showerhead - and whenever someone complains about a cold shower or a small showerhead, I think, you have no idea how the rest of the world lives. It made me really grateful for all the "ordinary" things in our lives.

I loved meeting and listening to Cedric. I still have a copy of the recipe for "Cedric's Hot Chocolate," and remember the lovely breakfast at his house before we left. Jenny Rothwell and Rolando Bunch were also wonderful people. And then, Wayne Blount, a West Point Cadet, showed up in town and became our friend. I would say that our group was anti-Vietnam but Wayne was a dear, dear man. It shows that we can come together. If I remember correctly, he rode back to the states with us.

I remember the first time I had frijoles (black bean dip) at Doc's house. Yum. Still love it to this day.

When we would walk from our house to the Clinic each morning, we would see women washing their clothes at a large pila (water tank). Again, another experience of how differently the majority of the world lives compared to U.S./Canadian/European folks.

I also remember how vacant the streets were. My memory is that there were very few people around, although there were market days. In retrospect I'm thinking that it was not a safe time in Guatemala and so the indigenous people were in hiding.

One time Shirley Miske and I went up into the highlands with Roland to visit a family. Roland was teaching the man about health care. The family had tortillas and frijoles (their total diet) and were so far from any other people. I wondered how they could live.

The lessons this trip reinforced for me were that all of us are regular human beings and some of us have so much to be grateful for, yet there's a lot of complaining that goes on. An example would be when air flights are delayed and people get angry. I think, hey, so what? You're safe. You have drinking water. You have flush toilets. You have food and shelter. You are able to travel without carrying loads of wood or other packs on your backs for miles and miles. You have health care readily available. Is it all perfect? No. But are you thankful for what you have?

My upbringing and my travel to Guatemala taught me a lot about justice and injustice. I feel very grateful to have grown up during the civil rights era, which seems to be an ever-ongoing part of history. For about six years I served on our church's Board of Church in Society. We have connections with El Salvador, Namibia, Cameroon, Petrosavask in Russia and Tanzania. We work to make all people welcome and to serve those who are struggling...be they homeless youth, abused women, people in transitional housing. I've volunteered at the food shelf, gone to protest at the School of Americas, and volunteered as a tutor/reader for children in school, driven for Meals on Wheels, been a confirmation guide.

Returning to Guatemala in 2005 with my children and the children/spouses of the 1971 group was amazing. Our kids learned a lot from that experience, as did I. It was amazing to see how much Chimaltenango has grown. It's wonderful to see the effect of MayaWorks. It was so profound to have been in Guatemala so that when news of the landslides of Hurricane Stan came, I deeply knew where these sites were. It makes such a difference to see pictures of San Antonio el Cornejo and to have actually been there. They are not just places, but actual people I've met. So wonderful. Love to Dr. Behrhorst and his family!